



## **Baltimore County 2020 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process**

Directors Report

February 18, 2020

### **Introduction**

The Baltimore County 2020 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process began on September 3, 2019, in accordance with Article 32 Title 3 Part II of the Baltimore County Code. This process is statutorily required to occur every four (4) years and includes separate filing deadlines for the public, the Planning Board, the Director of Planning and County Council members.

In general, the Department of Planning took a reasonable and conservative approach in the review of the requested changes in zoning. These recommendations are the result of a careful and extensive review process.

### **Policy Guidelines**

This is the second Comprehensive Zoning Review Map Process since the adoption of Baltimore County Master Plan 2020. Since that time, no community plans have been adopted and only limited study activities have occurred. Baltimore County has been utilizing the concept of the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL), Land Use Management areas and proposed land uses to assess proper zoning classifications and districts. It is essential to apply a consistent policy to the requested changes in zoning classifications. Therefore the zoning analysis focused on: consistency with Master Plan 2020, changes in the area, existing and surrounding zoning, existing and surrounding land uses and public infrastructure.

There were almost 500 acres of land in rezoning issues requesting some form of commercial zoning. In the Department's review of these requests, consideration was given to areas of distress that may need flexibility in the zoning to promote a vibrant commercial corridor, this included several of the existing shopping centers along arterial roads and main streets. The Department also considered limiting the encroachment of commercial activity into the residential areas. Finally, the Department took into consideration the appropriateness of the modification based on the surrounding commercial activity.

Several requests were made to modify the zoning in designated employment areas of the county. Since Master Plan 2020 has not been updated, the Department did not recommend changes at this time until further planning analysis and a comprehensive assessment of future land uses in these areas can be completed.

There were numerous requests to adjust zoning classifications to allow non-conforming uses to become conforming uses. The Department recognizes that non-conforming uses or less intense non-conforming uses may require expansion or redevelopment on sites where the use is currently occurring. The Department considered the surrounding land uses, the impact to the surrounding area and how the current operation is being conducted.

Finally, there were several issues requesting the Neighborhood Commons District (NC). The Department recognizes the need to preserve land and provide open space, however, rezoning these properties has no relative impact to the preservation of the properties since many of them already have stricter legal mechanisms in place, such as deeds or covenants, which protect the land from development.

### **Department of Planning Recommendations**

The Department utilized a number of staff resources to complete its analysis. This included research regarding development proposals, zoning history and field visits. Staff coordinated comments from several county agencies to obtain up-to-date information on the properties. Staff formulated the recommendations based on policy documentation, existing conditions and infrastructure assessments.

The table below displays a comprehensive review of the total number of requests compared to the Department's recommendations. A total of 308 rezoning requests, totaling 4,990.17 acres, were received. Of these requests, the Department of Planning recommended a change to 120 issues totaling 848.36 acres.

| <b>Zoning</b>                                 | <b>Amount of Land (Acres)</b> | <b>Planning Recommends a Change (Acres)</b> | <b>Planning Recommends no Change (Acres)</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Commercial</b>                             | 477.69                        | 170.08                                      | 307.61                                       |
| <b>Industrial</b>                             | 683.63                        | 159.75                                      | 523.89                                       |
| <b>High Density Residential</b>               | 182.06                        | 3.37  | 178.69                                       |
| <b>Low Density Residential</b>                | 1042.41                       | 112.46                                      | 929.95                                       |
| <b>Medium Density Residential</b>             | 899.32                        | 294.30                                      | 605.01                                       |
| <b>Office</b>                                 | 95.45                         | 59.64                                       | 35.82  |
| <b>Resource Conservation - High Density</b>   | 143.20                        | 15.90                                       | 127.30                                       |
| <b>Resource Conservation - Low Density</b>    | 1152.90                       | 24.71                                       | 1128.19                                      |
| <b>Resource Conservation - Medium Density</b> | 313.50                        | 8.15  | 305.35                                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>4990.17</b>                | <b>848.36</b>                               | <b>4141.81</b>                               |

The Department of Planning has completed the process of reviewing the zoning classification as required under County Code. We are available to assist the Planning Board and the County Council in any manner to understand and answer questions concerning our recommendations.



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Baltimore County Department of Planning